

Monastic tonsure by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia at the Holy Monastery of The Mother of God Pantanassa, Mangrove



The monastic brotherhood of the Holy Monastery of The Mother of God Pantanassa in Mangrove, New South Wales, has gained another selected member. On Friday Afternoon, 24 February 2023, at the end of the Vespers Service, of which His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia officiated at, the monastic tonsure of the novice monk Mr. Panagiotis Sergis took place in an atmosphere of spiritual devotion. The new monk received the name Theophilos in honour of one of the Holy Forty Martyrs, martyred in the lake of Sebastia.

As the celebration of the memory of Saint John the Forerunner had preceded, in commemoration of the 1st and 2nd Findings of his Holy Head, while the blessed and devotional period of Holy and Great Lent follows, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios, in his admonition address, focused on these two milestones, between which occurred the monastic dedication of monk Theophilos.

“Nothing in the life of a faithful person is opportunistic, accidental or coincidental”, he emphasised in introduction, adding that “every step and every moment of our life is part of the mystery of God’s providence”. “So, today the Holy Forerunner, the first of the Monks and angelic teacher of the desert, sends you forward”, he pointed out to the new monk and continued: “He prompts you, always pointing you to the ‘Lamb of God’ and at the same time calling you to a life of constant repentance.

It is a permanent experience in the life of the monk, which is not perceived as a momentary event or as an emotional and psychological type of situation, but as a course in which through the cultivation of the monastic virtues the monk becomes familiar or rather united with the Lamb of God . Because, this is the purpose of the exercise: the cohabitation with the beloved Lord and certainly not the conquest of some spiritual goals or virtues. After all, you know that virtues without Christ can become a cause of demonisation and not sanctification.” The Archbishop also reminded that in Orthodox spirituality, union with God is a process that always passes through the person of the brother and our relationship with him, pointing

out that through the neighbour we are led to holiness.

The other event, with which the new monk's tonsure coincides, namely our entry into the arena of Holy and Great Lent, can be for him a permanent reminder that his life must be a continuous and unceasing period of Holy and Great Lent, that is, a life full of repentance, spiritual vigilance, keeping vigil, patience, forgiveness, temperance, holy services of prayer and generally asceticism. "Many times, people unaccustomed to the ecclesiastical experience and our holy paternal Tradition", observed His Eminence, "believe that with Lent we enter a depressing period, a period of mourning, where someone, almost out of a self-defeating mood, is led to purification and redemption". "Obviously such a view is perverted and dangerous," he hastened to point out, "since it can lead man to terrible impasses and absurdities."

In support of this, His Eminence recalled this year's Catechetical Homily of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who notes with characteristic clarity that "it is a central experience of life in Christ, that genuine asceticism is never gloomy, since it is imbued with the expectation of the joy of the resurrection". "This is the true meaning of Great Lent: the expectation, the intense and unfailing anticipation of the Resurrection and the joy of the resurrection", added the Archbishop and paternally urged the new monk to embrace this meaning and during his solitary life and state to long for this meeting with the Risen Christ.

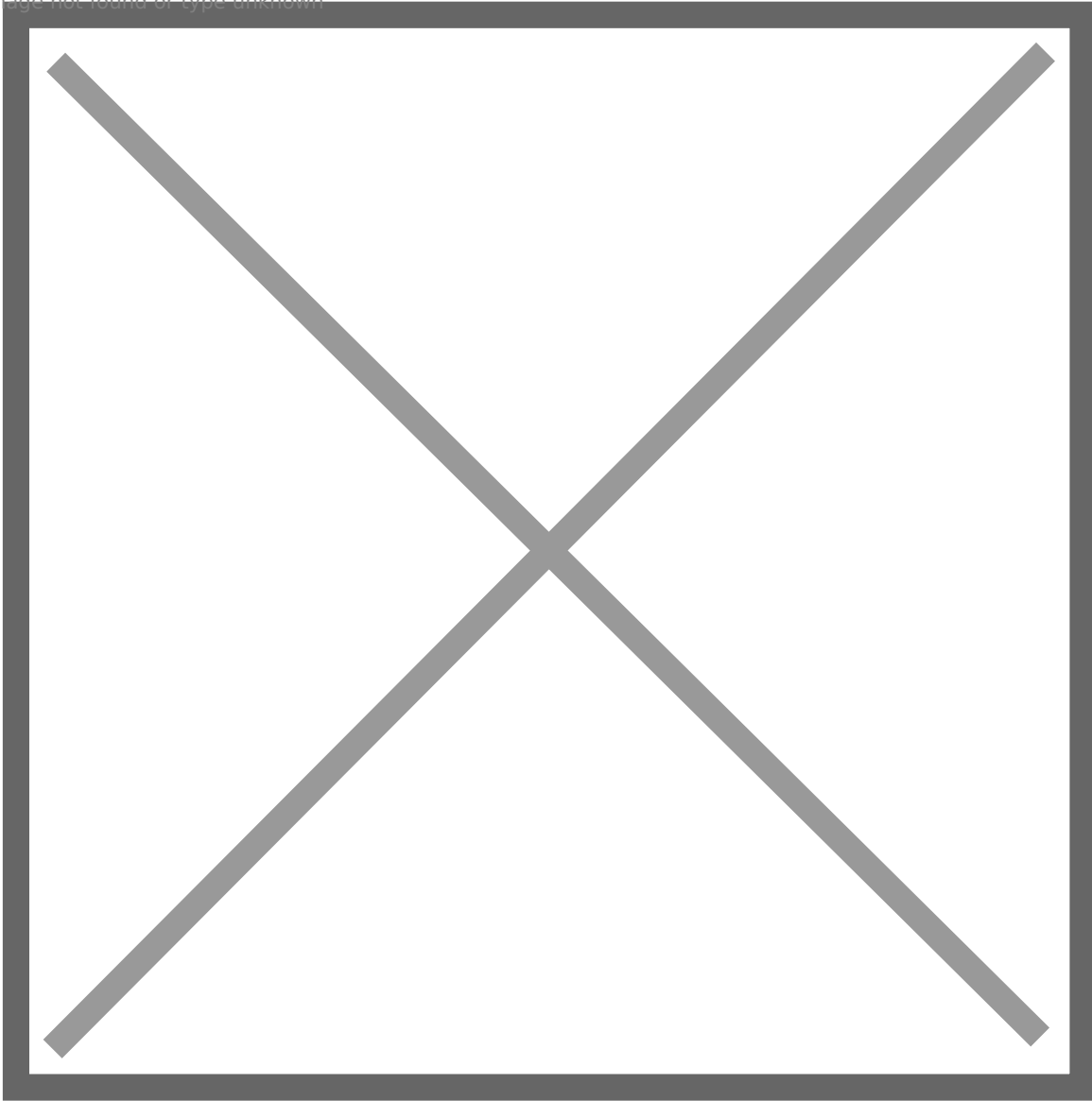
Concluding, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios encouraged Fr. Theophilos not to be discouraged in the face of failures, falls and sorrows, but with a valiant attitude and courage to continue to struggle and seek holiness. He wished him to live a God-loving and godly life, maintaining and increasing his holy friendship with Christ, while he congratulated the Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Pantanassa, Elder Eusebius, and his brotherhood, for the acquisition of a new and valuable member.







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